

Hello, I am Debbie Carpenter. I have been a mother, foster mother, adoptive mother. For the past ten years I have worked for New Hope Manor, in Manchester, CT. New Hope Manor is a DCF funded facility that has several group and residential homes for teenagers with Mental Health and behavioral issues. The recent DCF cuts were the catalyst for the decision made by New Hope Manor to shut its doors after 41 years of caring for these teens.

All of these teens have been in multiple placements. You don't start out at New Hope Manor, you need to be removed from your home, placed with a relative or family friend, then move on to foster care, hospitals, detention, couple of other residential settings, in no particular order. Most of these kids no longer have any family members willing to give them a chance. It would be nice if they did. These children have had very traumatic lives, besides unstable living situations, they have been physically, mentally and sexually abused. And believe it or not they act like **teenagers** who for real reasons do not trust adults because they have never had their basic needs met, and have been physically, mentally and sexually abused.

So the teens at New Hope are moving again. It won't be the last move for them, and they know it. Last week, when a fifteen year old was packing to move into a foster home, a staff member asked her if she needed help. She said, "no, I've been packing my whole life."

These kids have serious mental health issues. No matter where they are placed, they will still have mental health issues. Unfortunately many of these children are so damaged they will probably continue to have mental health issues well into adulthood. One of our most challenging children was released into the community last week, to an unsuspecting loving grandparent. She left our house cursing and threatening the DCF worker who picked her up to drive her to her grandmother's, this went on for 45 minutes before the two finally left the drive way. And now this child is somebody's neighbor.

Most of our kids are being placed in other underfunded DCF facilities. These budget cuts are following them around. With properly funded programs most of these kids have a chance to grow up to be healthy functioning adults. Without properly funded programs, these children with mental health issues will become young adults with mental health issues and behaviors. I am sorry, but it costs money to help these kids. Ignoring these kids is going to cost in the long run.

Within two weeks there will be 130 of us workers at New Hope Manor, without a job to support our families. We really haven't had much time to deal with our own loss. We are staying positive for **our** kids, which are becoming **your** kids. We are telling them things will be OK. Please take care of our kids.

Thank you.

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